

**The President.** I think it would be better for me not to comment now. I'd like to stay with my first statement. We're doing everything we think we can to help anybody that needs to be out of Iraq.

**Q.** Mr. President, what are your concerns about the building strength of Saddam's ground forces, though?

**The President.** Well, the main thing that we wanted to say was—first of all, the United States has done a great deal to help the Kurds over the years. And we've worked very hard. They make it more difficult to help them when their leaders continue to promote fights within the Kurds, within the Kurdish faction. And as you might expect, Saddam Hussein would try to take advantage of that.

Our ability to control internal events in Iraq is limited, but what we did do, which I thought was important, was when we found that what he had done contravened the United Nations resolution and constituted repression of his own people by carrying forward the military attack on Irbil himself, what we did was to expand the no-fly zone and enforce it and take out air defenses, which means that every day he has to pay a price in terms of his capacity to maneuver in his own country and threaten his neighbors.

And so we have done what we thought was appropriate there. I would still like to do more to help the Kurds, but frankly, if you want the fighting—for the fighting to be ended, the leaders of the various factions are going to have to be willing to go back to the peace table and talk it through. We have worked very hard with them, but that's a decision they're going to have to make, which will have a lot to do with the fate of their own people.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:02 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House on the occasion of receiving a report from the White House Commission on Aviation Safety and Security.

## **Memorandum on Assistance to Families Affected by Aviation and Other Transportation Disasters**

*September 9, 1996*

*Memorandum for the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Defense, the Attorney General, the Secretary of Health and Human Services, the Secretary of Transportation, the Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board*

**Subject:** Assistance to Families Affected by Aviation and Other Transportation Disasters

When an aviation or other transportation disaster occurs, the Federal Government properly bears responsibility for addressing the needs of families of the passengers involved. In the event of a disaster occurring abroad, the Department of State currently performs such functions. In the event of a disaster determined to result from criminal activity, the Department of Justice aids the families of victims. No unit of the Federal Government, however, now has clear responsibility, authority, and capacity to assist families of passengers involved in domestic disasters not determined to be criminal.

To fill the gap, I am asking the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), as the unit of the Federal Government with the lead role in investigating transportation disasters, to coordinate the provision of Federal services to the families of victims. Such services might include, as appropriate in the circumstances, providing speedy and accurate information about the accident and recovery efforts, ensuring that families who wish to travel to the accident site receive all necessary assistance, and arranging opportunities for counseling and other support. I am also asking the NTSB to work cooperatively with State and local authorities and with private relief organizations, such as the American National Red Cross, to ensure appropriate coordination of the services they provide with those of the Federal Government.

To enable the NTSB to perform these coordinating functions effectively, I am directing the heads of the Departments of State, Defense, Justice, Health and Human Services, and Transportation, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency to recognize the NTSB as the coordinator of services to families and to cooperate fully with the NTSB regarding the prompt and effective delivery of such services.

In particular, within 15 days of the date of this directive, the head of each listed department or agency is to designate an official who has primary responsibility for working with the NTSB to provide services to families. Within 30 days of this designation, each listed department or agency is to enter into a memorandum of understanding with the NTSB, specifying services the department or agency will provide at NTSB's request, as well as specifying any other cooperative arrangements to go into effect in the event of an aviation or other transportation disaster. The heads of the listed departments and agencies shall notify me promptly of all such memoranda.

By ensuring that a single agency has the responsibility to coordinate the provision of support services and the authority to call on other departments and agencies to provide such services, this directive will improve the capacity of the Federal Government to address the needs of the families of victims of aviation and other transportation disasters. In so doing, it may provide some small measure of comfort to families that have suffered grievous loss.

**William J. Clinton**

### **Remarks on Presenting the Presidential Medal of Freedom**

*September 9, 1996*

Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the White House. It's a great pleasure for Hillary and for me to welcome all of you here, but especially our distinguished honorees and their families; Members of Congress who are here, Senator Lugar, Congresswoman Collins, Congressman Conyers, Congressman Dellums; Secretary Christopher, Secretary Shalala, and Secretary Cisneros.

We're here to award the highest honor our Nation can bestow on a citizen, the Presidential Medal of Freedom. President Harry Truman established these awards as a tribute to those who helped to win the fight for democracy in World War II. President Kennedy elevated the medals to honor contributions by citizens to all aspects of American life.

Although we confer these medals today on worthy individuals, we recognize even more than individual achievement. We honor the American values that unite us as a people: opportunity and responsibility; a community in which all have a part; determination, dedication, and loyalty; faith, courage, and country. We are honoring renewed faith in the freedom that has brought this Nation this far and the freedom that will sustain us into the next century.

William Faulkner once said that we must be free not because we claim freedom but because we practice it. The 11 men and women we honor today have raised the practice of freedom to new heights. I would like to introduce each of them to you now.

As the Archbishop of Chicago, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin is one of our Nation's most beloved men and one of Catholicism's great leaders. When others have pulled people apart, Cardinal Bernardin has sought common ground. In a time of transition in his church, his community, his Nation, and the world, he has held fast to his mission to bring out the best in humanity and to bring people together. Throughout his career, he has fought tirelessly against social injustice, poverty, and ignorance. Without question, he is both a remarkable man of God and a man of the people.

Fifteen years ago, James Brady was at President Reagan's side when a would-be assassin nearly killed them both with a handgun he had purchased at a gun shop. But Jim Brady is living proof that courage and determination were stronger than the assassin's bullet. Since that day, Jim and his wonderful wife, Sarah, who is with us today, have waged a moral and political battle to save lives and keep handguns out of the hands of criminals. His life is a testament to bravery, and every American family and every American child is safer because of it.